

1           CLAIMS:

2           1. A business system comprising  
3                 a magnetic strip card with consumer identifying  
4                 information encoded thereon said information identifying a  
5                 consumer, said consumer desiring to conduct a transaction with  
6                 a vendor at a vendor location,

7                 a host system remote from the vendor location that  
8                 maintains information about discounts from said vendor,

9                 an apparatus at the vendor location for reading the  
10                 consumer identifying information on the magnetic strip card,  
11                 said apparatus interconnectible with and able to communicate  
12                 with the host system for ascertaining any discount of said  
13                 discounts applicable to said transaction, and

14                 means apart from the magnetic strip card for  
15                 automatically applying any applicable discount of said  
16                 discounts related to said transaction at the vendor location  
17                 for the benefit of said consumer, without consumer selection  
18                 of any said applicable discount and without requiring consumer  
19                 awareness of any said applicable discount.

1           2. The system of claim 1 further comprising

2                 means at the host system for receiving from the  
3                 vendor transaction information about said transaction, and

4                 means at the host system for storing said  
5                 transaction information.

1           3. The system of claim 2 further comprising

2                 means for calculating a future discount for the  
3                 consumer based on the transaction information.

1           4. The system of claim 3 further comprising

2                 means for providing the consumer with information  
3                 about the future discount.

1           5. The system of claim 3 further comprising

2                 means for calculating an amount of a retirement  
3                 account contribution for a consumer based on the transaction

4 information.

1 6. The system of claim 5 further comprising  
2 means for making a contribution to a retirement  
3 account of the consumer based on the calculated amount.

1 7. The system of claim 1 wherein said apparatus for reading  
2 the consumer identifying information on the magnetic strip card can  
3 communicate with the host system via the Internet global  
4 communications system.

1 8. The system of claim 1 further comprising  
2 means for automatically downloading to the computer  
3 information about said discounts without a request from the  
4 consumer.

1 9. A business system comprising  
2 a magnetic strip card with consumer identifying  
3 information encoded thereon said information identifying a  
4 consumer, said consumer desiring to conduct a transaction with  
5 a vendor at a vendor location,

6 a host system remote from the vendor location that  
7 maintains information about discounts from said vendor,

8 an apparatus at the vendor location for reading the  
9 consumer identifying information on the magnetic strip card,  
10 said apparatus interconnectible with and able to communicate  
11 with the host system for ascertaining any discount of said  
12 discounts applicable to said transaction,

13 means apart from the magnetic strip card for  
14 automatically applying any applicable discount of said  
15 discounts related to said transaction at the vendor location  
16 for the benefit of said consumer, without consumer selection  
17 of any said applicable discount and without requiring consumer  
18 awareness of any said applicable discount,

19 a computer at the location of the vendor for  
20 communicating with the host system,

21 means for automatically downloading information  
22 about said discounts to the computer without a request from

23                   the consumer,

24                   means at the host system for receiving from the  
25                    vendor transaction information about said transaction,

26                   means at the host system for storing said  
27                    transaction information,

28                   means for calculating an amount of a retirement  
29                    account contribution for a consumer based on the transaction  
30                    information,

31                   means for determining a pertinent geographic area  
32                    for the consumer, and

33                   means for automatically determining the pertinent  
34                    geographic area based on information about a consumer to  
35                    contact the host system.

10. A business system comprising  
      a magnetic strip card with consumer-identifying information encoded thereon;  
      a host system that maintains information about discounts from vendors;  
      an apparatus for reading information on the magnetic strip card, the apparatus  
      in communication with the host system and a payment processing system, the apparatus  
      capable of initiating a real-time communication link with the host system and initiating a  
      communication link to the payment processing system; and  
      wherein the host system maintains information about discounts from vendors  
      and applies such discount on an itemized basis for the benefit of a consumer when the  
      consumer purchases a discounted item at a vendor using the magnetic strip card.

11. A method for carrying out a purchase comprising the steps of:  
      reading at a point-of-sale terminal located at a vendor consumer-identifying  
      information encoded on a device having a readable data string;  
      maintaining a database of discounts available at the vendor;  
      determining on a real-tiem basis whether the items purchased by the consumer are  
      items offered at a discount by the vendor; and  
      transmitting a signal to the vendor to cause a discount to such items purchased by the  
      consumer on an itemized basis that are identified in the database as being offered by the  
      vendor at a discount.